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HISTORICAL SKETCHES

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OF THE

FIRST CHURCH IN HARTFORD.

A

CENTENNIAL DISCOURSE

DELIVERED

IN THE FIRST CHURCH

JUNE 26, 1836.

BY JOEL HAWES, D. D.

HARTFORD:

HUDSON AND SKINNER, PRINTERS.

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AT A MEETING OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN HARTFORD,
JULY 11, 1836.

Voted, That the thanks of the Church be presented to our Pastor, for his very appropriate discourse lately delivered on its second Centennial Anniversary, and that a copy of the same be requested for publication.

Attest,

WILLIAM W. TURNER, *Clerk*.

HISTORICAL SKETCHES
OF THE
FIRST CHURCH IN HARTFORD.



PSALM 78: 1-7. Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children; that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.

IT is two hundred years, this month,—on what day cannot now be determined,—since the church, accustomed to meet in this house, came to this town and commenced here the worship of God which it has ever since regularly maintained. I have thought the occasion a fit one for reviving some recollections of the history of the church and of its pastors, together with such reflections on the past, as may serve to make us grateful for the present, and afford us useful lessons for the future.

As we look back to the period when our fathers came here and began the great work of laying the foundations of our civil and religious institutions, a thousand interesting associations crowd into the mind, and we scarcely

know where to begin, in the discharge of the duty we have undertaken. We love to dwell on the virtues of the venerated men, to whose self denials, and toils, and prayers, we feel that we are indebted for the chief blessings that distinguish our lot. We are interested and instructed, when we contemplate the principles of civil and religious liberty which, in a dark and iron age, they developed and established in this new world. We are moved with wonder and gratitude, when we think of the wide spread influence of those principles, and of the immensely interesting consequences which have flowed from the humble labors of men, who, driven out, as exiles and criminals from their native land, sought an asylum for religion and freedom on these western shores. But on these topics we cannot now enlarge. Nor is it necessary, as we have often dwelt upon them on former occasions. My present design is more limited, and will be confined to such brief notices of our history as can be comprised within a single discourse.

The original founders of this church were a choice collection of men from Braintree and its vicinity, in Essex County, England. Like the great body of the first settlers of New England, they were Nonconformists or Puritans;* and not being permitted to worship God ac-

* This was a name which first obtained in the reign of queen Elizabeth, in 1564. It was a name of reproach, to distinguish and stigmatize those who did not conform to the liturgy, ceremonies, and discipline, of the church of England. Fuller says, 'it was improved to abuse pious people, who endeavored to follow the minister with a pure heart, and labored for a pure and holy life.' Trumbull, vol. 1, p. 280.

'It was a distinguishing mark of a puritan in these times, to see him going to church twice on the Lord's day with his Bible under his arm; and while others were at plays and interludes, at revels, or walking in the fields, or at the diversions of bowling, fencing &c. on the evening of the Sabbath, these with their families were employed in reading the scriptures, singing psalms, catechising their children, repeating sermons and prayer.' Neal's His. of Puritans p. 560.

cording to their views of duty in their native land, they, in 1632, emigrated to this country and settled at Newtown, now Cambridge, Massachusetts. There they built the first meeting house 'with a bell upon it;' and invited the Rev. Thomas Hooker, whose ministry they had occasionally enjoyed in England, to become their pastor. Accordingly in the summer of 1633, he, with about two hundred other passengers, among whom was the famous John Cotton, and Stone, and Pierce, and Haynes, and 'many other men of good estates,' embarked for this country, where they arrived on the 4th of September. On the 11th of October following, this church was organized at Newtown, and Messrs. Hooker and Stone were ordained its pastor and teacher.* It was the eighth church established in New England, and the first in this State.

* It was a common opinion, in the early history of New England, that in every church, completely organized, there was a pastor, teacher, ruling elder and deacons. Between the offices of pastor and teacher there was thought to be a difference; but in what it consisted, it is not easy now to ascertain.

The terms themselves, though at first distinct, soon became convertible, and the distinction, whatever it was in the beginning, was ere long lost sight of. Trumbull says that the pastor's work consisted principally in exhortation, working upon the will and affections. To this his studies and visits were chiefly directed; that by his judicious, and affectionate addresses, he might win the people to the love and the practice of the truth. But the teacher was *doctor in ecclesia*, whose business it was to teach, explain and defend the doctrines of christianity.

The business of the ruling elder was to assist the Pastor in the government of the church. He was particularly set apart to watch over its members; to prepare and bring forward cases of discipline; to visit and pray with the sick; and in the absence of the pastor and teacher, to lead the devotions of the congregation and expound the scriptures. It was an office very similar to that of deacon, and was not kept up, except in a very few churches, more than fifty years. The authority for these distinct offices was supposed to be found in Romans 12: 7. 1. Cor. 12: 28. 1. Tim. 5: 17. and Eph. 4: 17.

See Winthrop's Journal, by Savage—vol. 1, 31. Trumbull 1, 280, Hooker's Survey part 11. p. 4, 20.

In June 1636, a settlement having been effected here the preceding autumn, nearly the entire church and congregation, with its pastor and teacher, consisting in all of about one hundred souls, commenced a removal to this place. Now that the same distance is daily passed over in ten or twelve hours, we can scarcely conceive of the difficulties which our pious ancestors had to encounter, ere they could reach the banks of the 'beautiful Connecticut,' the place of their future home. They had to make their way through a 'hideous trackless wilderness; over mountains, through swamps and thickets and rivers, with no guide but the compass, with no covering but the heavens, and no lodgings but such as simple nature afforded them.' They drove with them one hundred and sixty cattle, and subsisted on the milk of the kine during the journey. After a fortnight's travel through the wilderness, tenanted only by wild beasts and savage men, they reached this place of their destination. Here they set up the worship of God in the regular administration of his word and ordinances. Here they lived and labored and prayed together. Here they enjoyed the special smiles of their covenant God and Saviour. Here they died; beneath and around us is the place of their sepulchres; and here, having ceased from their labors on earth, they ascended to their reward in heaven.

One of their first cares, after their arrival, was to provide a place of worship. Its location was a little North of where the Universalist meeting house now stands. It was of course a rude, inconvenient building, constructed of logs and covered with thatch. It was occupied only a short period as a place of worship, and, in 1649, was, by vote of the town, given to Mr. Hooker.*

* Town Records, vol 1, p. 67.

The second house for public worship was built in 1638. It was located a little distance eastward, from where the State house now stands, and served as the place of our father's worship 99 years.

It was a circumstance of great importance to the subsequent prosperity of the churches of New England, that they were founded by men eminently qualified for the work ; distinguished alike for their talents, their learning and their piety. This may especially be said of those who established the first churches of Connecticut. They were among the most pious, discreet and intelligent of the Puritans ; raised up in providence to impress a high character on the age to which they belonged, and to give a new and permanent direction to human affairs.

Thomas Hooker, the first pastor of this church, has justly been styled '*the light of the western churches and oracle of the colony of Connecticut.*' No sage of antiquity was superior to him in wisdom, moderation and firmness ; none equal to him in the grandeur of his moral character and the elevation of his devotion. If we except the Rev. John Cotton of Boston, perhaps no man in New England exerted a greater influence in the civil and religious affairs of the country than did this distinguished scholar and eminent servant of Christ. He was born at Marfield, England, in 1586, and was educated at Emanuel College, Cambridge, where he was afterwards promoted to a fellowship, in which office he 'acquitted himself with such ability and faithfulness as commanded universal approbation and applause.' After leaving the University, he preached for some time in London and afterwards at Chelmsford with great success. Among the multiplied fruits of his ministry in that place was Eliot, the famed apostle of the Indians.* So well was he

* One of the principal instruments which the God of heaven used in tinging and filling the mind of this chosen vessel (Eliot) with good principles

beloved by the neighboring clergy, that when in 1630, the Bishop of London silenced him for nonconformity, forty-seven of them signed a petition in his favor, testifying that Mr. Hooker was orthodox in doctrine, honest and sober in his life and conversation, of a peaceable disposition and no ways turbulent or factious. But this petition had no effect on the imperious and inexorable Laud. Mr. Hooker was compelled to lay down his ministry; and when afterwards summoned by the bishop to appear before the High Commission Court, he left his native land and fled to Holland. There he became intimately acquainted with the celebrated Dr. Ames, who declared that 'though he had known many scholars of divers nations, yet he never met with Mr. Hooker's equal, either for preaching, or for disputing.' With a genius and eloquence, which had he stooped to conformity, would have secured to him all the glory and power that an earthly ambition could court, he submitted for conscience sake, to the severest sacrifices and the most embarrassing distresses in his native land; and finally fled to the wilds of America, that he might here, with the christian friends, who had loved and revered him as a minister in England, establish a purer worship, and serve God according to the rules of his word. The man, who gathered this church and laid here the foundations of our religious institutions, in the principles of christian freedom, and of apostolic simplicity, ought

was the venerable Thomas Hooker, whose name in the churches of the Lord Jesus is as ointment poured forth. Prince's New England Chronology, 378.

Eliot refering to the fact above stated says,—'To this place I was called, through the infinite riches of God's mercy in Christ Jesus, to my poor soul; for here the Lord said unto my dead soul, *live*; and through the grace of Christ I do live, and I shall live forever. When I came to this blessed family, I then saw, and never saw before, the power of godliness, in its lively vigor, and efficacy. Magnalia vol, 1, 305.

never to be forgotten. It is good to contemplate his virtues and hold up his example to posterity. He was one of the ablest and most eloquent preachers of his day. All was life and reality in his exhibitions of truth;—bespeaking the deep fervor of his piety, and the rich resources of his mind. Though kind, and affable in his common intercourse, he appeared in the pulpit with such majesty and independence, that it was pleasantly said of him; ‘while engaged in his Master’s work, *he would put a king in his pocket.*’ In conversation, he was pleasant and entertaining, but always grave and instructive. In the management of church affairs, he was exceedingly wise and successful; and great was the prosperity and peace of the church under his ministry. But one person was admonished, and one excommunicated from the church, during the fourteen years that Mr. Hooker was its pastor. He died of an epidemical fever July 7th, 1647, in the 61st year of his age. He was a christian of deep and thorough experience. His conversion, which took place, while he was a member of the university, was strongly marked and the fruits of it appeared in a life of devoted piety and joyful hope. For many years before his death, he enjoyed an assurance of his renewed state and of final acceptance with God; and when dying, he said to a friend, who remarked to him, you are going to receive the reward of your labors, brother, *I am going to receive mercy.* He closed his own eyes and died with a smile on his countenance. A line of pious, useful and honorable descendants have embalmed the memory of their ancestor, and in a former age, his writings were valued with those of the very first class of New England divines.*

* After the death of Mr. Hooker, the church invited Mr. Jonathan Mitchel, to become their pastor. He preached his first sermon here June 24th, 1649.

The Rev. Samuel Stone, the teacher of the church, was worthy to be associated with its distinguished pastor. By the author of New England's Memorial, he is called 'a star of the first magnititude.' He was born at Hartford, or Hertford, in 1603; was educated at Emanuel College, Cambridge, and from a thorough examination of the subjects then in dispute, conscientiously adopted the sentiments of the Nonconformists. Of course he could not peaceably remain as a minister

The day following, that 'judicious assembly of christians,' as Mather terms them, invited him to settle with them; 'adding that if he saw fit to continue a year longer at college, they would immediately, upon his accepting their invitation, advance a considerable sum of money to assist him in furnishing him with a library, which they said was no new thing unto them. having had Mr. Hooker's instruction for doing so.' But being partially engaged to the church in Cambridge, Mr. Mitchel declined the invitation and was shortly after settled as successor to the famous Mr. Shepard. Mather's *Magnalia*, vol. 2, p. 72.

Hubbard, the earliest historian of New England, says of Hooker, that for prudence, wisdom, zeal and learning, and what might make him serviceable in the time and place he lived in, he might be compared with those of the greatest note. He needs no other praise than the fruits of his own labors in both Englands, which shall preserve an honorable and happy remembrance of him forever. Hubbard's *History of New-England*, p. 541.

In 1642 letters came to Cotton of Boston, Hooker of Hartford, and Davenport of New Haven, signed by several of the nobility, divers members of the House of Commons, and several ministers, to call them to assist in the Assembly of Divines at Westminster. The magistrates in and near Boston thought it a clear call of God. But Hooker did not like the business and thought it not a sufficient call to go a thousand leagues to confer about matters of church government, and so wisely determined to stay in quiet and obscurity with his people, rather than turn propagandist and plead in vain for independency in England. Several persons, who came over to New-England in 1643, made a muster to set up a presbyterian government under the authority of the Assembly at Westminster, 'but a New England Assembly, it is said,—*the general court is meant*—soon put them to route. Hutchinson, vol. 1. 112. Hubbard's *History*, 415.

Mr. Hooker's 'Survey of Church Discipline,' which was published in 1648 and the principles of which had been fully discussed in the Synod that met at Cambridge in 1646, contributed powerfully to check the growth of Presbyterianism and to settle the churches upon the Congregational basis.

in his native land. Being invited by Mr. Hooker to become his assistant, he embarked with him for this country in 1633. Here, in the happiest union with his venerated and much loved colleague, he was for thirty years the teacher of this church. After the decease of Mr. Hooker, he was the sole minister of the people, and remained so till his death, which took place July 26th, 1663. Though but little is said of Mr. Stone in our early annals, that little is enough to render his memory dear and his name honored. 'He was eminently pious and exemplary; abounded in fasting and prayer, and was a most strict observer of the Sabbath.' 'His ministry was with much conviction and demonstration, and when he set himself to application, *very powerful*.' He was esteemed one of the most accurate and acute disputants of his day,—was of a ready wit and of a pleasant, cheerful temper; which made his society to be much courted, by all persons of ingenuity and learning, who had the happiness of an acquaintance with him. The latter years of his life were embittered by a painful controversy in the church, originating in a dispute upon some ecclesiastical topic, between him and a ruling elder.* What was the real origin of the contention it is not easy to determine; but it lasted nearly twenty years, with some temporary suspensions, and involved all the country around in the quarrel. The general court particularly interested themselves in the affair, and by their well meant, but injudicious interference, greatly increased the difficulty. Cotton Mather, in his quaint style, remarks, 'that from the fire of the altar, there issued thunderings and lightnings and earthquakes through the colony.' He also says,—'that the true original of the misunder-

* This, so far as I can learn, is the only difficulty of any agitating importance, that has ever existed in the church.

standing was about as obscure as the rise of Connecticut river., Dr. Trumbull however intimates that the whole controversy respected the qualifications for baptism, church membership, and the rights of the brotherhood. He suggests likewise that Mr. Stone's ideas of congregationalism bordered more on presbyterianism, and less on independence, than those of the first ministers in the country in general. His sententious definition of congregationalism was, *a speaking aristocracy in the face of a silent democracy.** From all this, it seems not unnatural to infer, that the schism referred to, arose from a spice of presbyterianism. However this may be, all attempts to allay the animosities were without effect. In the progress of the controversy, a part of the congregation removed and laid the foundation of the town and church of Hadley. After this Mr. Stone continued a few years in greater quietness, much beloved by his people, and witnessing the blessing of heaven on his ministry. He was a good man, and rests with the faithful stewards of God in the glorious rewards of heaven. In anticipation of that happy state, he was accustomed with much longing to say,—‘heaven is the more desirable, for such company as Hooker and Shepard and Haynes, who are got there before me.’

The successors of the two eminent ministers just named, were John Whiting and Joseph Haynes. Owing to the destruction, by some cause, of all the early records, both of the church and society, very little can now be known, either of the character or ministerial acts of these servants of Christ. Tradition speaks of them as men of piety and talents and much honored and respected in their day. They both graduated at Harvard College, the former, in 1653, and the latter in 1658.

* Trumbull, 308.

Mr. Haynes was son to the first governor of Connecticut; one of the first and most distinguished of the founders of this church and colony. Mr. Whiting was ordained in 1660, and Mr. Haynes, 1664.

On the 12th of February, 1670, under their ministry, the church divided. Thirty-two members, who withdrew from the church, were regularly organised into a new church, in the south part of the town, and Mr. Whiting became their pastor. He died in 1689. Mr. Haynes, who remained sole pastor, after the separation, died May 24th, 1679, in the 38th year of his age, and the 15th of his ministry. The division of the church, though amicably effected at the time, was doubtless hastened by the difference of sentiment, which had long existed among the brethren, relative to the qualifications of church members, the subjects of baptism, and the mode of discipline. A party, urged on by State influence, had long been gaining strength in the country, who were for lowering the terms of admission to the church. They wished to enjoy the privilege of membership, so far as to be regarded as professors of religion and have their children baptized, without being required to exhibit evidence of personal piety, or come to the communion. This introduced what was called the half way covenant. The plan, it is said, originated in this state. It was formally discussed and adopted at a meeting of ministers in Boston in 1657, and ratified anew in all its essential features, by a general synod in 1662. This wretched system of compromise, though at first strongly opposed by a great number of the ministers and churches, subsequently came to be generally adopted and resulted in immense mischief to the cause of religion. Mr. Whiting and a part of the church, zealous for the strictly congregational way, as practised by the first ministers and

churches of New England, were decidedly opposed to the change, as a great and dangerous innovation. Mr. Haynes and a majority of the congregation were not less disposed to favour it; and the difference, as before stated, resulted in the formation of the second or south church.

Isaac Foster succeeded Mr. Haynes in the pastoral office in this church. His ministry was short, continuing only three years. He was ordained near the close of the year 1679, or the beginning of 1680, and died January 1683. He graduated at Harvard College in 1671. The late Dr. Strong remarks of him, that 'he was eminent for piety and died young.' This is the only record that remains of him, and though brief, it is honorable, and places him among the just whose memory is blessed.

The next pastor of this church was the Rev. Timothy Woodbridge, who graduated at Harvard College in 1675, was ordained Nov. 18th 1685, and died April 30th, 1732, at a very advanced age, and in the 47th year of his ministry. Time has swept away nearly all the materials from which we might draw the character of Mr. Woodbridge, or learn the history of his protracted ministry.* In a sermon preached at the dedication of this house in 1807, Dr. Strong says; 'many who are now in the grave, have related to us, how they were convinced of sin, and enlightened into a knowledge of the truth under his ministry.' Judging from the time-worn and very imperfect records of his ministry, in my possession,

* The only records that remain of the church, previous to my ministry, are contained in a small leather bound duodecimo volume, and relate chiefly to admissions to the church, baptisms, acts of discipline and deaths. They commence with the settlement of Mr. Woodbridge in 1685 and are confined to his ministry and that of his two successors, Rev. Messrs. Wadsworth and Dorr. The entire records of Dr. Strong's ministry are lost.

I should form a decidedly favourable opinion of his piety and diligence, and of his sincere exertions to promote the spiritual welfare of his people. He bore an active part in the measures which resulted in the founding of Yale College in 1700. He was also a member of the convention that met at Saybrook in 1708, to form a constitution of government for the churches in this State. He lived in a period of great and wide spread spiritual declension. The piety of the pilgrim fathers had passed away. The serious and strict religion, that characterized the early churches of New England, had been supplanted by great formality and deadness. Laxer views of doctrine had extensively obtained in the country ; and the practice of admitting persons to the church on the half way covenant, as it was called, which had *gradually* been gaining ground since the meeting of the synod in 1662, exerted a most blighting influence upon the interests of vital religion. Whether Mr. Woodbridge was at first an advocate of the practice does not appear. The great body of the church we know were in favor of it ; and from the fact that it was fully introduced and acted upon in the early part of his ministry,* it is probable that the sentiments of the pastor coincided with those of his people, and both were left to the sad results of falling into so great an error. The power of the ministry was crippled and the vitality of the church paralyzed. The custom of owning the covenant was resorted to in the place of sound conversion ; and those who had gotten part of the way into the church seemed generally well satisfied to go no further. Hence, while great numbers were induced to come forward and own the covenant, very few entered the church in full communion, and the number of members who came to the sacrament was lamentably small. The

* 1696. Trumbull 471.

like practice was about the same time introduced into the south church and gradually into many other churches of the colony, and is, doubtless, to be regarded as one of the principal causes of the deep spiritual declension which overspread the churches about that period.

The Rev. Daniel Wadsworth succeeded Mr. Woodbridge. He was a graduate of Yale College in 1726; was ordained Sept. 28th, 1732, and died Nov. 12th, 1747, in the 43d year of his age, and 16th of his ministry. During the ministry of Mr. Wadsworth, the third house of public worship was erected by this church and society nearly on the spot where our present house stands. The foundation of it was laid August 8th, 1737, and it was dedicated December 30th, 1739*. The sermon preached by Mr. Wadsworth on the occasion, which I have seen, is in a neat, perspicuous style and breathes a truly evangelical spirit. Dr. Strong says of him that 'he was a close student, an accurate reasoner, and an evangelical preacher,' and adds 'his memory is precious to many of our aged christians.' He was succeeded by the Rev. Edward Dorr, who was ordained April 27th, 1748, and died October 20th, 1772, in the 50th year of his age and 25th of his ministry. He graduated at Yale College in 1742. He is remembered, by a few aged people among us, as an amiable and pleasant man, to whom they went to school in their early years. In a sermon preached by the Rev. Mr. Whitman of the South Church on the occasion of his interment, he is spoken of as a man of a clear understanding, of solid judgment, of a kind and benevolent disposition, extensively versed in theoretical and practical divinity and a useful, instructive preacher. He enjoyed calmness and

* The foundation of the present house was laid March 6th, 1806, and was dedicated December 3d, 1807.

peace of mind during his protracted illness ; and as his end approached, he said to a friend that the prospect of death was not distressing to him, as he had a comfortable hope that his peace was made with God. I find this prayer at the close of the record, written by himself, of the exercises at his ordination. ‘ Give me grace, O God, to be a faithful, and make me a successful minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ.’

During the period, now under review, and for a considerable time after, religion, in this place, and extensively through the land, was in a very low and declining state. The country was in an unquiet, disturbed condition. The standard of ministerial and christian effort was extremely low. There were no societies either for propagating the gospel at home or abroad. Meetings for conference and prayer were almost wholly unknown. The sum total of ministerial labor was to preach on the Sabbath, deliver a lecture preparatory to the communion and attend marriages and funerals in the parish.* Revivals were extremely rare, and by great

* The amount of labor expected of ministers at the present day is three or four times as great as it was fifty years ago. Besides bearing a part in promoting the numerous benevolent operations of the day, it is now deemed important that a minister, in addition to the stated services of the Sabbath, should conduct a public meeting of some kind on Sabbath evening, preach or do what amounts to preaching two or three lectures during the week, and at the same time keep up a regular course of pastoral visitation.

Within a few years a great change has taken place in the public mind in regard to what were formerly called, by way of contempt, ‘night meetings.’ It is within the memory of many now living, that no such meetings were held in this city; and within the memory of most, that no stated place was provided in which to hold them. The first lecture or conference room in this State, it is believed, was erected by individual members of this church, and this was no further back than 1813. Now such a room is regarded as an indispensable accommodation in every well regulated parish. The ‘old conference house,’ being inconveniently located and too small to meet the wants of the society, it was relinquished in 1831, and the present capacious and most convenient room provided. It was opened with appropriate services December 22d, 1831.

numbers, were regarded with suspicion and dislike. The half way covenant tended only to make half way christians and to drive all spirituality and life from the church. The Holy Spirit appears to have withdrawn his gracious presence from the churches; ministers and people were extensively 'settled on their lees,' and a moral dearth, of the most portentous character, had overspread the land. As might be expected, the number of persons, in full communion with this church, was extremely small; and for many years previous to 1795, when religion began to revive, comparatively few came forward to own the covenant.

Such essentially was the state of things, when, in 1774, Dr. Strong was ordained pastor of the church. He was one of the most distinguished men of his day. Many whom I now address, remember him well as their spiritual instructor, and not a few love and venerate his name as their spiritual father. It was his lot to come upon the stage at a most interesting period of our history. The country and the churches were in a transition state, passing into new forms of government, and into a higher condition of spirituality and truth and christian enterprise. The period was eminently favorable for the development of talent and to the calling forth of effort. The age demanded men of clear minds and good hearts to revive the drooping cause of religion; and it found them in such men as West, and Smalley, and the younger Edwards, and Goodrich, and Trumbull, and Hart, and Emmons, and Backus, and Dwight and Strong. These men were the principal agents, under God, of correcting some errors, both in doctrine and practice, which had long been gaining ground in the community, and of preparing the way for the happy era of revivals and of benevolent effort, which have since prevailed in our country.

In effecting this blessed change, no man, it is believed, exerted a more decided influence than did the late venerated pastor of this church. Dr. Strong was made to exert an influence. He had a mind of the first order for activity and penetration. He possessed an almost intuitive insight into the character and motives of men, and could, while very much concealed himself, touch the springs of action in others and move them to execute his schemes. This talent, coupled with a sound judgment, great fertility of invention and readiness of execution, gave him an influence in intercourse with society which to some seemed unaccountable, and enabled him to realize most of his expectations and plan. Though the fact does but imperfectly appears in his writings, he was a man of extensive reading, well acquainted with the literature and science of the day, and had few equals in a knowledge of the religious and political state of the world. The former part of his ministry was not distinguished by any special tokens of success. It was a period of war and of great political excitement; and though he did not neglect the proper duties of his office, it is but saying what he afterwards often confessed and lamented, that his mind was too much drawn off from his ministerial work by engagement in other pursuits. But during the last twenty years of his life, he laboured with great fidelity and diligence and with most marked success. His preaching became more solemn and impressive, and was aimed more directly at the heart and conscience. The Holy Spirit set his seal to his labors, and great was the success which crowned the latter half of his ministry. In 1799, he witnessed a powerful revival among his people in which a large number were made the subjects of renewing grace. Four years previous to this, the church enjoyed a season of refreshing,

during which a considerable number were added to its communion. In 1808, and again in 1813 this people were favored with a signal work of the grace of God. In these revivals the pastor rejoiced as the special fruits of heaven's mercy; and he labored, in season and out of season, for the spiritual welfare of his people. In return, he had the happiness to receive from them the testimony of a grateful affection and a most devoted attachment to him as their pastor and guide. In addition to his labors in the pulpit, which, it has been said, during the last years of his life, were greater than those of any other settled minister in the State, he devoted much time to objects of general benevolence. He was the originator, and for many years the principal conductor, of the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine, one of the ablest and most useful publications of the kind.* He also originated the plan of the Missionary Society of Connecticut, one of the earliest in this country, and which has extended the light of life to hundreds of thousands in the destitute parts of our land.† His published sermons, though unadorned and often negligent in respect to style,‡ abound in clear and powerful ex-

* During the first five years of the publication of this work, the average number of copies printed was 3730. All the profits of the work were sacredly devoted to the permanent fund of the Missionary Society of Connecticut. In six years there had been paid into the treasury 7,353 dollars. The whole amount paid over to the Society was 11,520 dollars.

† He was likewise the first mover in the formation of the Connecticut Bible Society. He suggested the plan to his brethren at a meeting in Hartford, May, 1807. Had it then been carried into effect, this society would have been the first in the country. It was not formed till the May following. The Philadelphia Bible Society had been established a few months previous.

‡ Though there are many fine passages in his writings, he appears to have felt in regard to mere style much as did the 'famous Hooker.' 'That this discourse (Survey of Church Discipline) comes forth in such a homely dress and coarse habit, the reader must be desired to consider, it comes out of the wilderness, where curiosity is not studied. Planters, if they can provide

hibitions of truth; and may be regarded as among the best sermons extant, to be read in religious meetings, in a season of revival. As a preacher, he possessed the rare talent of presenting great truths in a clear, practical manner. Dispensing with technical language and metaphysical niceties, he presented the doctrines and precepts of the gospel as matters of common sense, no less than of revelation, and thus labored to make his hearers feel that religion is a personal, vital concern, and that there is no excuse for neglecting it a single moment. Though he had an almost irrepressible propensity to wit and sarcasm,—a dangerous talent for a minister to possess, and sometimes used by him as it should not have been,—yet it has often been remarked, that nothing ever escaped his lips in the house of God, calculated to excite a ludicrous thought, or awaken a vain smile. His whole manner in conducting the services of the sanctuary was deeply solemn and impressive,—adapted to hide the man and present God; to exclude the world and bring near eternity. He became hopefully a christian while a member of college; and his light steadily increasing, shone brightest at its going down. In his last sickness, which was short, he enjoyed the consolations and hopes of that religion which he had so long recommended to his people. He died December 25th, 1816, in the 69th year of his age, and 43d of his ministry.

This church has reason to hold his name in ever grateful remembrance, as among the ablest and most useful of its pastors, and, especially, as an instrument,

cloth to go warm, they leave the arts and lace to those that study to go fine. As it is beyond my skill, so I profess it is beyond my care to please the niceness of men's palates. They who covet more sauce than meat must provide cooks to their mind.—The substance and solidity of the frame is that which pleaseth the builder; it is the painter's work to provide varnish. Preface to the Survey &c.'

blessed of God, for the reviving of religion in this place and introducing a higher standard of christian character and action.

The present pastor was ordained March 4th, 1818, and is now in the 19th year of his ministry. It seems but yesterday that I stood here to take upon me the vows of ordination and consecrate myself your servant for Jesus sake. But I have lived to serve you longer in the ministry, than several of my predecessors; and long enough to have buried a great proportion of those, who took a part in my call and settlement over you as a minister. The years I have spent here have been years of care, and anxiety and toil; but years also of satisfaction and joy in my work. Though I feel that I have reason for great humiliation and repentance for innumerable deficiencies in duty, yet I desire to record it, to the praise of Him who called me to serve him in the gospel, that my labor has not been in vain. There have been five special seasons of ingathering among this people since I was set over them in the Lord; besides occasional droppings of heavenly mercy. The whole number admitted to the church during my ministry is 732. The present number of members on the catalogue is 585. Since I have been with you, two new churches of our denomination have been established in the city, chiefly by members from this church,—the North in 1824, and the Free Church in 1832.* The churches in East and West Hartford were also colonies from this church,—the former established in 1701,—the latter in 1711. The mother rejoices to see these her children springing up and prospering around her; and while, as is natural, she feels a peculiar at-

* Ninety seven members were dismissed to form the North Church, and eighteen to form the Free Church.

tachment to her own offspring, and to those that bear her own name, she prays, with the most sincere affection, that grace, mercy and peace may be multiplied to all, of every name, that love our Lord Jesus Christ.

In passing from these brief sketches of the history of this church and its ministers, to some reflections suggested by them, I am led to remark,

1. That this church has always held *substantially* the same system of doctrine. I say *substantially*; because there has doubtless been some variety in respect to modes of explanation and statement. But there has never been a time, since Hooker and Stone first propounded here the doctrines of the Puritans, when those doctrines, in their essential principles, did not enter into the faith of this church. It has always believed in the divinity and atonement of Jesus Christ; in the fall and consequent entire sinfulness and ruin of man; in the necessity of regeneration by divine influence; in justification by faith in the Redeemer; in the moral government and universal purposes of God and in a future state of everlasting rewards and punishments, to be adjudged to men according to the deeds done in the body. These doctrines have been held with greater strictness, and preached with greater clearness and power, at some times than at others; and it is worthy of special notice, that when they have been held with the greatest strictness and preached with the greatest power, then the church has been most prosperous, and has shared most largely in the special tokens of the Holy Spirit's presence and influence. The darkest and most sterile period, in the history of the church, was during the fifty years, that preceded the ministry of Dr. Strong; including indeed a part of his ministry; and this precisely is the period during which the doctrines referred to had the

least prominence in the preaching of the pastor and the feeblest hold on the faith of the people. This is an instructive fact; and it should lead us to prize the *faith* of our pilgrim fathers, not less than their piety; and to build all our hopes of the future prosperity of this church and society, on a firm and steady adherence to the great, essential doctrines of the gospel.

2. This church has from the first been friendly to revivals of religion and owes all its prosperity to these oft repeated tokens of heaven's mercy. There have been seasons of long continued suspension of divine influence, when the church was brought very low, both in spirituality and in numbers. This was especially the case, during the period just referred to; when indeed, there was a general moral dearth through the country. But there never has been a time, since the planting of this church, when its pastors did not look with a friendly eye upon revivals, and its members did not regard them with decided approbation and favor. The excellent men who founded the church were the subjects of revivals and had been trained up under their influence. The ministry of Mr. Hooker, while in his native land, was crowned with 'wonderful success' by the Holy Spirit. At Chelmsford, where, for some time, he served as lecturer, multitudes, under his preaching, became the subjects of renewing grace, many of whom removed to this country and were the founders and first members of this church. After its establishment in this place, signal were the displays of grace in the midst of it. An early writer, referring to this period, exclaims,—O, that converting glory which did then appear; multitudes were converted to thee, O Zion. Let me say, multitudes, multitudes were converted to thee, O Hartford, to thee, O New-Haven, to thee, O Windsor. Owing to the imperfection of our

records, we cannot now ascertain the number or extent of the seasons of refreshing, which were subsequently enjoyed by this church ; but from incidental circumstances, as well as from the known character of its pastors, I find reason to believe, that such seasons were not unfrequent, and that, throughout the whole history of the church, they have been welcomed as special blessings from God. How revivals were regarded under the ministry of the late Dr. Strong I have already intimated. During the last twenty five years of his life he witnessed four revivals among his people. The most powerful of these was in 1799, when large numbers were added to the church, the tone of its piety much elevated, and the state of religion, generally, in the city, greatly improved. The last commenced in 1813, and continued nearly two years, at no time very powerful, but marked with a constant, silent descent of divine influence, and producing abundant and most happy results. The church, containing, I am informed, but fifteen male members, at the settlement of Dr. Strong in 1774, became large and flourishing in consequence of the revivals that took place under his ministry, happily united in sentiment and greatly enlivened in its graces, and at the time of his death in 1816, it contained four hundred members. Since my ordination in 1818, there have been as before stated five revivals in the congregation ; and what I have often said from this pulpit, I now repeat ; this church is what it is very much from the influence of revivals of religion. If there is, among this people, any cordial belief and love of the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel ; any serious practical regard to the duties of the christian life ; any self denial and bearing of the cross and following Christ according to his commands ; any active benevolence and prayerfulness

and readiness to do good ; in a word, any pious, efficient concern for the glory of God and the salvation of sinners, either at home or abroad, in christian or in heathen lands,—all this is to be traced, in no small part, to the influence of revivals of religion ; and it is to be found in an eminent degree, among those who have been added to the church as fruits of revivals. Let this church then continue to regard revivals as the most precious of God's gifts. Let it never be forgotten, that it was planted in the spirit of revivals ; that it has prospered by the spirit of revivals, and that all its hopes of future prosperity depend on the continuance of these seasons of mercy. If ever this church ceases to feel its dependence on the Holy Spirit, or comes to regard with unbelief or indifference his special influence, as connected with the salvation of the soul,—that day will the sun of its prosperity go down, and God will write upon the doors of its sanctuary, 'the glory is departed.'

3. This church has been greatly distinguished for its character of stability and harmony. With the exception of the difficulty before alluded to, I cannot learn, that any thing has ever occurred, in the management of its affairs, essentially to mar its peace or endanger its union. It would seem, that there has always been a good degree of unanimity in the call and settlement of its ministers ; as there also has, under their respective ministrations.* Ten pastors have been settled over the

* The manner of calling and settling a minister, long practiced in this church, and generally in the congregational churches throughout the State, is the following.—The church first call the minister ; the society or parish, at a legal meeting, concur in the invitation, and vote the salary ; at the time appointed, he is set apart to his office, after due examination into his qualifications, by a select council of ministers and delegates from neighboring churches, or by consociation, as is practiced in some parts of the State. In a few cases, in this vicinity, there has recently been a departure from this course of procedure,—the society moving first in presenting the call, and thus

church; the present is the tenth,—and nine of them lie sleeping among the people to whom they preached. This Society has never dismissed a minister; a fact, which speaks much in favor of the character, both of the people and of the ministers who have served them in the Lord.* I find many things on record, which show the uniform respect and affection, with which the pastors have been treated by the people to whom they have ministered. Not only has suitable provision been made for their support, but repeatedly have special grants been made to them, as expressive of confidence and esteem; and various acts of sympathy and kindness done, to assist and encourage them, in their work. To this uniform kind feeling, on the part of the church and society, it is doubtless owing, that their ministers have lived and labored here, in peace and success; happy in the ties which bound them to the people of their charge, and have died and gone to rest with those to whom they broke the bread of life.

Were I permitted to add my testimony in the case, I should feel constrained to say, that by no official, or associated act of this congregation, has a half hour's uneasiness been occasioned me, during the more than eighteen years that I have served them as a minister. To the goodness of God, we are no doubt, primarily and most thankfully, to ascribe the stability and harmony, which

taking the precedence of the church. This, by a vote of the Hartford North Consociation passed in 1832, was decided to be an irregularity, and a sufficient ground for a council to refuse to proceed in the ordination.

It was also voted at the same time that 'this body deem any agreement made between a minister and his people, at the time of his settlement, providing for a termination of the relation on terms prescribed by themselves, independently of the advice of the Council, is improper and irregular.'

* The removal of Mr. Whiting with a number of members to form the South Church can hardly be regarded as an exception to the above statement.

have so long characterized this religious community. Were I to assign a secondary cause of this, I should suggest the fact, that none are here accustomed to assume the right to dictate, or govern without the consent of others ; or to carry any measures by means that will not commend themselves to calm consideration and sound judgment ; and when the majority have decided a case, the minority are accustomed peaceably to acquiesce. Let it be our fervent prayer that the spirit of conciliation and peace, that has for so many years blessed this church and congregation, may live and reign in our bosoms, and be transmitted to those who shall come after us, even unto the end of time.

4. I deem it proper to remind you on this occasion that this is a congregational church. And the vital, fundamental principle of a congregational church is, *that it has in itself the power of self government ; the right to choose and appoint its own officers, and to regulate all its concerns, independent of external jurisdiction, and responsible to none but God.* This principle lies at the foundation of this church. It was placed there by Hooker and Stone and the godly men who followed them into the wilderness. Let it lie there. It is a good foundation. It rests upon solid rock, even the truth of God and primitive practice. It has served us well for two hundred years. For two hundred years it has continued to preserve the church in peace, in purity and great general prosperity. Why then should it be exchanged for another ? ‘ True, this is a consociated church ; and I deem it a happy circumstance that it is so. But it has not by this lost its independence. The consociation has no *original jurisdiction* at all over this church. It is simply a standing council of arbitration or appeal, to which parties, having a difficulty in the church, may go

for advice and assistance.* But the ultimate power of decision is after all in the church. There I say let it be. Let it never be transferred to any body, single, or associated, that is independent of the church, or that claims authority over it. This would be to abandon the independence of the churches; the very principle which the pilgrims held dearer than life; and to defend and propagate which, they willingly suffered and died, exiles in this western world.

5. The members of this religious community, both church and society, are placed under weighty and solemn responsibility to God and to posterity. You, my friends, are reaping the fruits of the toils and sufferings and prayers, of the venerated men who first penetrated into this wilderness, and erected here the standard of the cross. You have entered into their labors and are here enjoying, in independence and in peace, the privileges which it cost them infinite hardships to procure and establish. Be it your care to perpetuate the precious inheritance, and to transmit it unimpaired, nay, enriched by your piety and prayers, to those who are to come after you. Let not the proud, presumptuous feeling be for a moment indulged, which would lead you to boast that you are rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing; or to

* Hooker, who may be regarded as the father of the system of consociation, has well expressed the power of that body in relation to the churches.

‘Consociation of Churches should be used, as occasion doth require. Such consociations and synods have allowance to counsel and admonish other churches, as the case may require, and if they grow obstinate in error or sinful miscarriages, they should renounce the right hand of fellowship with them. But they have no power to excommunicate; nor do their constitutions bind *formaliter et juridice*. A particular congregation, (church) is the highest tribunal; the power of censure rests in that, where Christ placed it.’ Survey. Preface and Part IV. p. 19.

See this point ably discussed in Chr. Spectator, 1831, p. 370, 1835. p. 570. Bacon’s Church manual, p. 160–201.

say with haughty ones of old,—‘ The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.’ Such a spirit would offend God, provoke him to withdraw from us his mercies, and to leave this vine to spiritual decay and death. Be not high minded but fear. The strength of a church does not consist in wealth or in talents, or in the number of its members, or in outward advantages of any kind ; but in spirituality, and in a readiness for self denial and effort in the cause of God and human salvation. The little band that came here, weary and way-worn, in 1636, and first paid their worship under the spreading branches of the trees, or in their own rude log house, had more moral strength, and exerted more influence, for the kingdom of God and the good of mankind, than many a church in this land, with its hundreds of members, and spacious temple, and all things rich and splendid in its accommodations. No feeling should so deeply possess our minds as that of ‘ our immense, our awful responsibility.’ We are indeed bound to acknowledge, with the most devout gratitude to Almighty God, the protection of his providence and the smiles of his grace towards this church. Here for ten successive generations, the same gospel has been preached, that was preached by the excellent men that watched over and nourished it in its infancy. Here a long line of faithful pastors have lived, and labored, and died. Here the Holy Spirit has often and signally manifested his presence and grace, and hundreds and thousands of immortals have been rescued from the power of sin, and have gone up, in long and bright succession, to their dwelling place in heaven.

We stand in the line of the privileges, once enjoyed by the sainted spirits of our fathers, and of the means, by which they were fitted for glory. Let us

guard the sacred trust, which we have received from our pious ancestors, and convey it, bright and pure, to those who are to live here when we are gone. Let us cleave to the doctrines which made our fathers wise unto salvation; cherish the piety which shed so heavenly a lustre over their characters, and live and labor, as they did, for the glory of God and the good of coming generations. Then like them, we shall live, when we are dead; and multitudes, yet unborn, will rise up and call us blessed. Then, when another century shall come, this church, 'invested with the increasing dignity of a more venerable age,' shall be seen blooming and vigorous, 'in the possession of that heavenly beauty, which was stamped upon her youthful form;' lifting up her voice of truth and warning to the people that shall then dwell here, and shedding a clear and bright light upon the path that leads to life and heaven.

'Another century shall come.' But we shall not be here. Our bodies will be mouldering in the dust and our spirits have returned to God who gave them. The graves of our ancestors are beneath and around us; and a voice, deep and solemn, comes up from the generations that have here passed into eternity before us, warning us of the inevitable allotment, and bidding us prepare for the scenes of coming destiny. Oh, how short and fleeting is the life of man! In a few days, we shall all be gone; in a few more, the very stones that may mark the place of our burial, will be crumbled, under the hand of time, and by all on earth, we shall be forgotten, as if we had never been. Let us stand in our lot, and be faithful unto death; then shall we die in peace, be gathered with our fathers, and with them receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

And now may the same Almighty and Merciful Being, who for two centuries has guarded and blessed this vine of his own planting, continue to shed down upon it the refreshing dews of his grace, even unto the end of time. Here may the gospel ever be preached in purity and power; all its holiest influences be felt; its divinest fruits be exhibited, and its richest consolations enjoyed. May there be here a perpetuated succession of wise, devoted and successful pastors, who shall break the bread of life to a united, affectionate and christian people. And when the voices of those, who now worship here shall be silent in death, may their children and their children's children, to the latest generation, enjoy the presence and behold the glory of God, and ascend, from this place, in growing multitudes, to join heart to heart with the ransomed of the Lord, in the purer and nobler worship of heaven.

APPENDIX.

PASTORS OF THE CHURCH.

	ORDAINED.	DIED.	AGED.	MINISTRY.
Rev. Thomas Hooker,	1633,	July 7, 1647,	61,	14 years.
Rev. Samuel Stone,	1633,	July 20, 1663,	61,	30 years.
Rev. John Whiting,	1660,	1689,	*10	years.
Rev. Joseph Haines,	1664,	May 24, 1679,	38,	15 years.
Rev. Isaac Foster,	1679,	Jan. 1683,		3 years.
Rev. Tim. Woodbridge,	1685,	April 30, 1732,		47 years.
Rev. Dan. Wadsworth,	1732,	Nov. 12, 1747,	43,	16 years.
Rev. Edward Dorr,	1748,	Oct. 20, 1772,	50,	25 years.
Rev. Nathan Strong,	1774,	Dec. 25, 1816,	69,	43 years.
Rev. Joel Hawes,	1818,			

DEACONS.

NAMES.	CHOSEN.	DIED.
Andrew Warner, was in	1639,	
Edward Stebbins, was in	1665,	
Paul Peck,	1681,	
Joseph Easton,	1681,	
Joseph Olmsted,	1681,	
Nathaniel Goodwin,	1734,	
John Edwards,	1734,	1769,
Isaac Sheldon,		1749,
Thomas Richards,		April 1749, Æ 83.
Joseph Talcott,	1748,	1781,
Ozias Goodwin,	1756,	
Daniel Goodwin,	1769,	
Benjamin Payne,		Jan. 1782, Æ 54.
John Shepard,		1789,
Solomon Smith,		1786,
Caleb Bull,		1789,
Ezra Corning,		July 1816, Æ 79.
Isaac Bull,		Nov. 1824, Æ 84.
Joseph Steward,		April 1822, Æ 69.
Aaron Chapin,	1813,	
Aaron Colton,	1813,	
Josiah Beckwith,	1813,	
Russell Bunce,	1821,	
William W. Ellsworth,	1821,	
William W. Turner,	1828,	
		Jan. 1827, Æ 64. removed 1825.

* Mr. Whiting was also Pastor of the South Church 19 years from 1670 to 1689.

IN 1648, was published in London a "Survey of the Summe of Christian Discipline," a work by the Rev. Mr. Hooker, in defence of the Churches of New-England. His manuscripts were left in charge of his friends, Mr. Edward Hopkins and Elder William Goodwin. Following the preface to this work, is their address to "the Congregation and Church of Jesus Christ in Hartford", which bears date October 16, 1647. From that part of it which speaks particularly of Mr. Hooker, we make the following extract.

"But the only wise and holy God, for our great unworthinesse hath lately made a sad breach upon us by the death of our most dear Pastor (the Author of the ensuing Treatise) whereby our glory is much eclipsed, our comforts not a little impaired, and our fears justly multiplied. The stroke is direfull and amasing, when such a stake is taken out of the hedge, such a pillar from the house, such a Pastor from his flock, in such a time and place as this.

It is not our purpose or is it suitable to our condition and relation, to lay out the breadth of the excellencies wherewith through the abundant grace of the Lord he was inriched and fitted for the service of his great name, or if we were willing to improve our selves in that kinde, have our pens received an anointing for such an imploiment; what we expresse is onely to put you and our selves in mind of the unvaluable losse we have sustained, that our hearts being deeply and duly affected under that sad afflicting providence, we may look up to the holy one of Israel our Redeemer, who teacheth to profit, that instruction may be sealed up unto us thereby.

He was (as you well know) one of a thousand, whose diligence and unweariednesse (besides his other endowments) in the work committed to him, was almost beyond compare. He revealed the whole counsell of the Lord unto us, kept nothing back, dividing the word aright. His care was of strong and weak, sheep and lambs, to give a portion to each in due season, delighting in holy administrations, which by him were held forth in much beauty and glory. In this work his Master found him, and so cal'd him to enter into his glory. Some of you are not

ignorant with what strength of importunity he was drawn to this *present service*, and with what fear and care he attended it. The weight and difficultie of the work was duly apprehended by him, and he lookt upon it, as somewhat unsutable to a Pastor, whose head and heart and hands, were full of the imployments of his proper place.

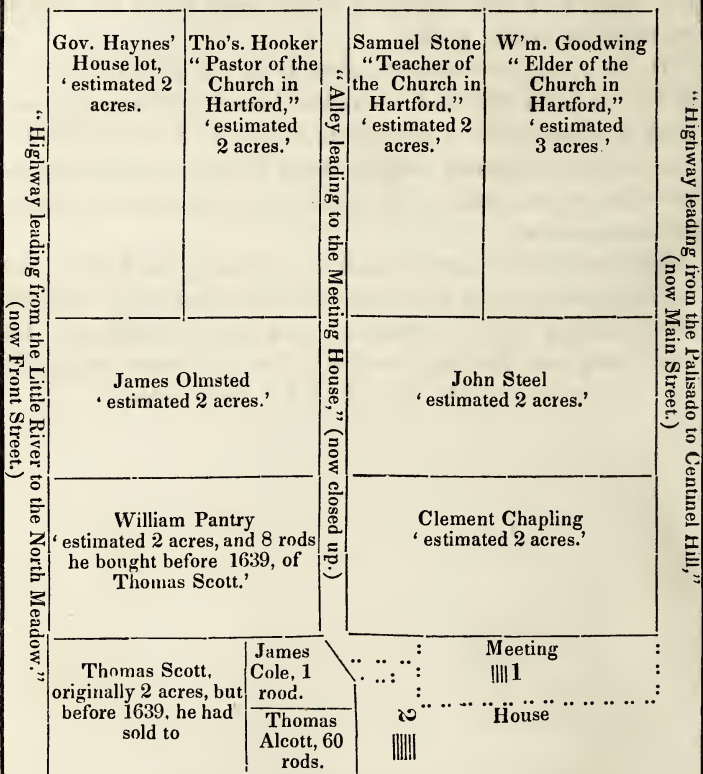
Besides, his spirit mostly delighted in the search of the mystery of Christ, in the unsearchable riches thereof, and the work and method of the spirit, in the communication of the same unto the soul for its everlasting welfare, some discovery whereof may hereafter be presented to the world, as the Lord gives liberty and opportunity.

Such strength of parts clothed with humility, such clear and high apprehensions of the things of God, with a ready cheerfull condescending to the infirmities of the weak (which was his daily study and practice) are not often to be found among the sons of men, nor yet the sons of God in this world."

Section of Hartford as it was Feb. 1639.

LITTLE RIVER.

"Highway on the North Bank of the Little River," (now Arch Street.)



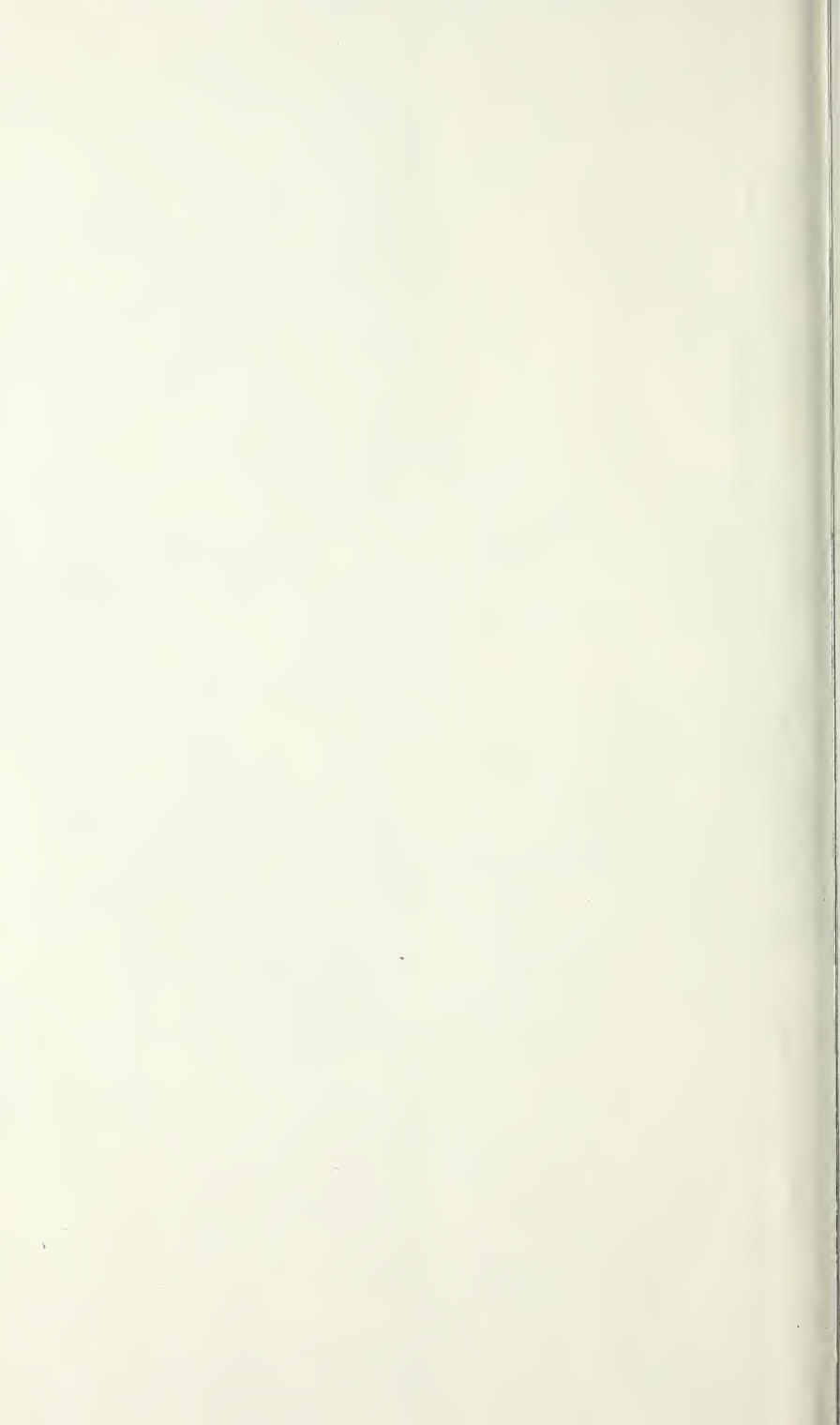
"Highway leading from the Little meadow to the meeting house," (now State Street.)

These House Lots, excepting one, are 'estimated two acres more or less,' but their boundaries will make them three acres; and the one estimated three acres probably contained four.

Figures 1 and 2, refer to the first and second meeting houses built here, and designate their situation.

The whole (now) State House square, with all the encroachments which have since been made upon it, was then called the "Meeting House Yard." The dotted lines on the South side of the yard show the encroachments since made, and the Town grants to individuals.





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